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SUBJECT: MADAGASCAR: A SOUTH AFRICAN VIEW OF THE SADC SUMMIT

Classified By: AMBASSADOR NIELS MARQUARDT FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D.

¶11. (C) I met on June 23 in Jo'Burg with South African Ambassador to Madagascar Sam Monaisa to hear his views on the weekend SADC Summit, which he had attended. Monaisa said he also had attended UN mediator Tiebile Drame's Friday briefing of the South African foreign minister, and he later helped her brief President Zuma before the Summit itself. He also played a hand in drafting a five-page briefing paper for Zuma, on which Drame had taken the lead. Monaisa confirmed that the new South African government, and Zuma personally (with whom Monaisa has a prior relationship from working together on Burundi ten years ago), were intent on playing a much stronger leadership role in resolving the Malagasy political impasse.

¶12. (C) Monaisa said Zuma's first task was to neutralize King Mswati. Monaisa had explained to Zuma on Saturday that the emotional impact on the King of Ravalomanana's March 30 statement to the SADC heads of state in Mbabane was based on an outright lie: Ravalomanana's assertion to them that he was "forced to resign at the point of a gun" was simply not true, he had told Zuma. Although Ravalomanana clearly had resigned under duress, Monaisa explained to Zuma the actual circumstances on March 17 at the palace when Ravalomanana presented his resignation decree to Monaisa, Drame and myself -- with not a soldier in sight, with a human shield of his supporters around the palace, and having created a military directorate which surprised and infuriated the mutineers, who therefore would never have forced him to sign it. Zuma presumably explained this to Mswati. In any event, their one-on-one conversation immediately before the Summit went on for well over one hour, keeping the others waiting. But it seemed to have worked as Mswati was silent throughout the discussion, went along with the new approach, and welcomed the appointment of Chissano as the new lead mediator.

¶13. (C) Although not mentioned specifically in the Communiqué, Monaisa said that the venue for the next mediation phase was determined to be either Mauritius or Angola (Swaziland also offered but this is considered a non-starter). Either place would be seen as neutral, unlike South Africa, which acknowledged that its role as host to Ravalomanana might be problematic. Monaisa said he thought Angola would get the nod. He also called the supporting cast for Chissano "high-powered," comprising both former Swazi

Prime Minister Absalom Themba Dlamini and a renowned legal expert. Dlamini, he said, did not agree with either his King or foreign minister; rather he was fully in line with the AU and UN positions and is delighted with Zuma's handling of the King. Having been in Madagascar several times, Dlamini will provide useful continuity to the mediation.

¶4. (C) Monaisa admitted that there was some tension between SADC and the AU over SADC's takeover of the mediation. However, with a former head of state now engaged as lead mediator and given the principle of subsidiarity to regional organizations, he thought the AU would remain engaged but had no choice but to accept this change. As a former ambassador to Gabon, Monaisa said he knows Ping well and thought Ping would go along. We both agreed that AU leadership of the mediation had been less than professional to date, and so welcomed Chissano's arrival as a step forward.

¶5. (C) Finally, Monaisa said he felt sorry for the way Ravalomanana had been treated at the Summit. He had been invited to a waiting room, where he worked on remarks he planned to deliver if invited into the plenary. In the event, he was never invited in, and so spent hours waiting while never seeing the heads of state. Monaisa opined, however, that a humbling experience like that would probably help Ravalomanana as he struggles to come to terms with current reality.

MARQUARDT